



## Guest Editor's Introduction: Political Voice in Europe

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## Guest Editor's Introduction: Political Voice in Europe

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### ABSTRACT

This special issue of the *International Journal of Sociology* explores political voice in Europe from qualitative and quantitative methods. Political voice is the expression of interests in the political sphere and refers to both participation and representation. The four papers of this special issue feature recent work from political sociologists at the Graduate School for Social Research, Polish Academy of Sciences and include case studies of the Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Russia, and a cross-national study of Europe. Taken together, these studies explore how voice operates in authoritarian and democratic regimes, and transitions between them.

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Political voice can be defined minimally or maximally. Minimally, political voice is the expression of interests within the political system (e.g. Schlozman et al 2012). Scholars tend to think of voice as participation. Participation can be defined, to use one of Teorell et al's (2007) dimensions, as influence attempts (see also van Deth 2014).

A maximalist definition presents the contours of voice and adds "representation" as a dimension. Maximally, political voice is (a) participation – verbal, physical, symbolic, monetary, or otherwise – in the political sphere by individuals, organizations, social groups, interest groups, or entire populations in electoral and non-electoral situations. In this maximalist sense, voice is also (b) representation by movements, organizations, or political leaders and other figures. Representation has many dimensions (e.g. Pitkin 1967; Mansbridge 2003). From a voice perspective, representation is someone or something engaged in the expression of interests in the political sphere on behalf of others or to promote an idea.

Voice's two main dimensions – participation and representation – appear in different European contexts and scholars can study voice from various methodological approaches. This special issue of the *International Journal of Sociology* features two qualitative studies on social movements after revolutionary transitions in the Czech Republic (by Inna Bell) and Ukraine (by Olga Zelinska). It also features two quantitative studies of voice as participation during electoral authoritarianism (by Olga Li) and across European countries (by Olga Lavrinenko). Taken together, these studies explore how voice operates in authoritarian and democratic regimes, and transitions between them.

Civil society organizations (CSO) can represent and amplify the voice of others, but they face challenges in their attempt to survive regime transitions. Inna Bell uses archival data and interviews of former CSO leaders to explore how, through adaptations to the changing environment, some CSOs from the Czech Republic survived the transition from Communist Party-rule to the present. The past can be a boon, as it provides name recognition and extant leaders, personnel, and other resources to survive the transition. However, the very things that enabled their survival – the name, the resources – can be a burden as the organization struggles to find new volunteers and sources of funding. To build their future, CSOs that survive the Communist era attempt to redefine their own past.

Social movement organizations both participate and represent, but whether they create social change is difficult to assess. Olga Zelinska uses a social constructionist approach to explore how Ukraine's Maidan participants outside of Kyiv – the "Local Maidan" – perceive the consequences of that nationwide social movement. Former Local Maidan participants said that there was some moderate replacement of the elite from positions of local power and that local government became more receptive to public criticism. Yet, the nationwide scene after Euromaidan – the national elections that did not produce a radical shift in the national elite (see Sadowski and Pohorila 2017), and the ongoing war in the east of the country – contained the scale of radical changes at the local level.

Who uses their political voice in authoritarian regimes? Olga Li explores political voice in Russia from 2006 to 2016, a time when Putin rose to power and the country descended into electoral authoritarianism. Li uses five waves of the European Social Survey and finds that political grievances – degree of satisfaction with democracy, in particular – matter. Russians who are satisfied with the way democracy works are more likely to vote but are less likely to engage in non-electoral participation (a range from contacting a politician to boycotting products). Russians with a political grievance show opposite tendencies; they are less likely to vote but are more likely to express their voice in other ways. Li ends the paper wondering how everyday Russians understand democracy, and how nuances in their definition associates with political voice.

In theory, political and economic structures interact with cognitive processes to influence the potential for political voice (Jenkins et al 2008). The Structural Cognitive Model (SCM) is an opportunity to explore these interactions and their implications for voice but, as Olga Lavrinenko points out, major cross-national surveys have few of the items SCM needs to measure these cognitive factors. Lavrinenko shows how the latest edition of the European Values Survey can be used to test SCM models. With a focus on two dimensions of efficacy, Lavrinenko finds that, whereas internal social efficacy does not vary by country-level economic and political conditions, the association of external political efficacy with protest varies by the openness of the political structure.

This special issue features new research by young political sociologists. All four articles are by alumni of the Graduate School for Social Research (GSSR), a postgraduate institution of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) founded in 1992, led by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFiS PAN), and which includes the Institute of Psychology and the Institute of Political Studies. The authors of the articles published in this guest edited issue conducted their research at GSSR and IFiS PAN.

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